**Self-selected voluntary reading: The missing link**

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**Two views of language/literacy development**

1. The comprehension hypothesis: we acquire language when we understand it.
2. grammar, vocabulary = RESULT of language acquisition
3. pleasant immediately
4. The skill building hypothesis: first learn about language, practice rules
5. grammar, vocabulary learned first, then you can use the language
6. delayed gratification (that never arrives)

Special case of the comprehension hypothesis: the reading hypothesis - reading is the source of our reading ability, writing ability (writing style), vocabulary, spelling, grammar competence. Most powerful form = free voluntary reading (FVR)

**WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS**

**SSR: Sustained silent reading**

The Fiji Island study (RRQ, 1983): Elley & Mangubhai: gains in RC

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| grade | ALM | SSR | Big Books |
| 4 | 6.5 | 15 | 15 |
| 5 | 2.5 | 9 | 15 |

year 2: larger differences, readers better in writing, listening and grammar

Reviews of SSR studies with second language acquirers

Effect Sizes for Three Recent SSR Meta-Analyses: English as a foreign language (EFL)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Vocabulary | Reading Comprehension |
| Krashen (2007) |  | .87 (15) |
| Nakanishi (2015) | .18 (9) | .68 (15) |
| Jeon and Day (2016) | .47 (17) | .54 (46) |

Number of studies analyzed in parentheses ( ).

**Multivariate analyses: rival hypotheses in direct competition!!**

Spanish as a foreign language - test of subjunctive was “monitor-free”;

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Predictor | Beta | p |
| Study | 0.0052 | 0.72 |
| Residence | 0.051 | 0.73 |
| Reading | 0.32 | 0.034 |
| subjunctive study | 0.045 | 0.76 |

From: Stokes, Krashen & Kartchner, 1998

Amount of reading & **TOEIC scores**: each hour of reading = .6 points gain. Mason, B. M. and Krashen, S. 2015. Can second language acquirers reach high levels of proficiency through self-selected reading? An attempt to confirm Nation's (2014) results. International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching 10(2):10-19.

Amount of reading & **TOEFL scores**: Gradman, H., and E. Hanania. 1991. Language learning background factors and ESL proficiency. Modern Language Journal 75: 39-51; Constantino, R., Lee, S.Y., Cho, K.S., and Krashen, S. 1997. Free voluntary reading as a predictor of TOEFL scores. Applied Language Learning 8: 111-118.

Amount of reading & **vocabulary size** (English speakers, age 42)

1. Reading at age 42 counts, independent of reading at 16 or younger & previous vocabulary.

2. Fiction counts

3. Reading counts even when you control for parent occupation and parent education.

4. reading counts more than your own education, AND is independent of your educational level

Sullivan, A. and Brown, M. 2014. Vocabulary from Adolescence to Middle Age. Centre for Longitudinal Studies, University of London

**Case histories:**

Liz Murray (Breaking Night): "Any formal education I received came from the few days I spent in attendance, mixed with knowledge I absorbed from random readings of my or Daddy's ever-growing supply of unreturned library books. And as long as I still showed up steadily the last few weeks of classes to take the standardized tests, I kept squeaking by from grade to grade."

Bishop Desmond Tutu: “One of the things I am most grateful to (my father) for is that, contrary to educational principles, he allowed me to read comics. I think that is how I developed my love for English and for reading.”

**Reading and knowledge:** Stanovich & colleagues: those who read more know more about literature, history, science, have more "cultural literacy," "practical knowledge."

“omnivorous reading in childhood and adolescence correlates positively with ultimate adult success" (Simonton, 1988)

Michael Faraday (1791-1867): influence of working for a bookbinder for 7 years.

**The pleasure of self-selected reading**

- A reader interviewed by Victor Nell (1988): “reading removes me ... from the irritations of living ... for the few hours a day I read ‘trash’ I escape the cares of those around me, as well as escaping my own cares and dissatisfactions.

- Somerset Maugham, in Nell (1988): “Conversation, after a time, bores me, games tire me, and my thoughts, which we are told are the unfailing resources of a sensible man have a tendency to run dry. Then I fly to my book as the opium-smoker to his pipe ...” (p. 232).

Nell: 24/26 pleasure readings read in bed “nearly every night” or “most nights." Bedtime reading “a habit which I certainly do not wish to break. Even if I read for only five minutes, I must do it - a compulsion like that of a drug addict!” … “My addiction to reading is such that I almost can’t sleep without a minimum of ten minutes (usually 30-60 minutes) of reading."